



U.S. Forest Service

Quarterly Partnership Updates

November 24, 2015

Topic: Quarterly Partnership Updates for the NLC – July-September 2015

Issue: Forest Service partnerships in the last quarter of 2015 benefited Greater Sage Grouse and Mule Deer while supporting forest stewardship, watersheds, wildlife habitat protection, and historic sites and leveraging more investments in innovative ways. New partnerships to promote jobs and veteran and youth employment complemented advances in youth engagement outdoors and collaboration with underserved and tribal communities. Partners promoted better health outcomes through nature, explored health impacts of fire, and found new ways to do social vulnerability assessments under urgent conditions such as last year's Ebola outbreak in Liberia. High Performance Partnerships supported hazardous fuel and energy corridor treatments, reduced wildfire risks, and restored burned areas in critical watersheds. Brief summaries of these and other exciting new partnerships follow.

High Performance Partnerships

- *Rocky Mountain Watershed Protection Partnership:* Region 2 continues to implement the Denver Water partnership agreement. Through a regional MOU established in July 2010, Denver Water is contributing \$16.5 million over five years, with an agency match of \$22 million, to help reduce wildfire risks and restore burned areas in critical watersheds. 2,470 acres were treated this fall, and a total of 31,300 acres of hazardous fuel and reforestation treatments have been completed to date on national forest and private lands.
- *Western Utilities Partnership:* Region 2 entered into an agreement with Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) to treat sections of critical power line outside of the ROWs on the Salida Ranger District of the Pike - San Isabel National Forests. Approximately 100 acres was treated using a WAPA contractor in October. The group collectively continues to identify priority energy corridors for treatment.
- *Western Watershed Enhancement Partnership:* Region 2 continues to work closely with the Bureau of Reclamation, water utilities, the Colorado State Forest Service and other partners to accelerate hazardous fuel treatments near BOR facilities in the Colorado-Big Thompson and Fryingpan-Arkansas watersheds. These partners have contributed a total of approximately \$700,000, with an approximate 1:1 agency match, to support treatments on over 1300 acres. 260 acres have been completed to date on public and private lands.

Region/Station/Area Summaries

Northern Research Station provides accessible kayak and canoe launch, and gets more than 4,000 kids out on the water. The Northwest Indiana Area Urban Waters Federal Partnership, which is led by Northern Research Station, reports some recent successes, including Indiana's first ADA-accessible kayak/canoe launch in Michigan City, Indiana and a Wilderness Inquiry

Canoemobile activity that got more than 4,000 kids out on the water. The kayak/canoe launch runs along Trail Creek which flows in to Lake Michigan not far from the launch. Local news coverage is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sOHZWJkmNGI>. The Forest Service is engaged in Urban Waters Partnership efforts in Northwest Indiana, Baltimore, the Greater Philadelphia region, Seattle, Denver, and additional locations.

Pacific Northwest Research Station partners promote health through nature. The Oregon Business Council and numerous partners including REI, USFS, the Willamette Partnership, Portland State University and the Oregon Public Health Institute developed the framework for a partnership to accelerate positive health and conservation outcomes for all Oregonians by increasing the presence of, access to, and use of parks, nature and the outdoors. The Oregon Health and Outdoors Framework officially launched on November 10, 2015. The effort has an emphasis on traditionally underserved communities.

Pacific Southwest Research Station signs MOU with Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences to recognize their Swanton Pacific Ranch as a new Cooperating Experimental Forest. The university's Swanton Pacific Ranch, located near Santa Cruz, California, is a 3,200-acre landscape composed of a majestic redwood forest, lush riverine ecosystems and expansive coastal grassland overlooking the bay and the Pacific Ocean just north of Santa Cruz along California's scenic Highway 1. The five-year agreement will facilitate an increase in research projects at the Ranch aimed largely at monitoring and attempting to predict the effects of climate change on the nation's farm, range and forest lands. Recognized for its high biodiversity and abundant resources, the ranch provides a valuable opportunity to study the methods of resource conservation applied through sustainable management techniques. The Forest Service's system of Experimental Forests and Ranges provides places specifically designated and administered to enable the research necessary for developing improved methods of forest and range management. Cal Poly's existing operation of the ranch as a hands-on research and teaching facility makes it well-suited for the kind of work done on the 80 experimental forests across the nation.

Rocky Mountain Research Station's Silalirijit projects link traditional ecological knowledge with technology-based climate modeling. To improve our understanding of weather in the Arctic, RMRS is linking traditional ecological knowledge with technology-based climate modeling. RMRS works through a multicultural and multidisciplinary team of physical and social scientists and collaborators called the "Silalirijit collaborative" (pronounced see-lah-LEE-ree-yeet). Focusing on high-latitude North America, Silalirijit projects combine qualitative and quantitative methods into a transformative process of mutual discovery between scientists and communities. In the past quarter, to support collection of weather data, RMRS scientist Kelly Elder designed a state-of-the-art weather station network for the Clyde River area on Baffin Island. This area is used heavily by the community for recreation and hunting. Scientists with the Silalirijit collaborative also worked with First Nation students to teach them to compare, contrast, and integrate indigenous observations and knowledge with western scientific methods.

Southern Research Station looks at new ways to develop rapid, quantitative social vulnerability assessments. John Stanturf, Scott Goodrick, Christie Stegall, Melvin Warren Jr (SRS) and Susan Charnley (PNW) partnered with USAID and the Liberia Institute of Statistics

and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) on the Social Vulnerability and Ebola Virus Disease in Rural Liberia project. USAID supported the initial work focused on vulnerability of Liberia to climate change. As part of that work, the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) in Monrovia, Liberia supplied the census data used in developing a social vulnerability index. When the Ebola epidemic struck in 2014 we were interested in seeing whether the social vulnerability aspect of the climate change assessment might be helpful in this context. Turns out the social vulnerability information derived from census and household survey data mapped at the district level highlighted areas vulnerable to outbreaks, like the Ebola virus. This work demonstrated how an approach developed for one context, such as climate change and natural hazards in this case, can be adapted for different situations when there is a need for rapid, quantitative social vulnerability assessments.

Southern Research Station, CDC explore smoke and health impacts. Through Partnerships for Public Health, Rob Doudrick, SRS Station Director and Tony Tooke, and R8 Regional Forester are collaborating with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to discuss issues and solutions related to prescribed fire, wildfire, and associated smoke impacts to human health.

Region 1 advances historic conservation partnership acquisitions and financial support. In 2007, the Bair Ranch Foundation (TBRF) contacted the U.S. Forest Service and suggested a public purchase of the Bair Ranch Foundation Property. To accomplish this historic conservation effort a model partnership was soon formed between TBRF, the Forest Service, the Tenderfoot Trust, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. During the past six years (2010-2015), the Tenderfoot partners have successfully completed a total of nine phased acquisitions, consolidating all 8,221 acres of offered lands into the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The final phase was completed in 2015. The project received Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funding as well as private donations. The 8,221-acre Tenderfoot Creek acquisition has received support from the Meagher County Commissioners, Montana's Governor, MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, and more than 30 local Montana sportsman and angler conservation groups. The project has also received financial support from the Elk Foundation, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, MT Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Trust, Cinnabar Foundation and other RMEF Habitat Partners.

Region 2's White River National Forest Ski Conservation Fund supports \$500,000 in projects for stewardship. The White River National Forest Ski Conservation Fund is a partnership between the NFF, Vail Resorts, Copper Mountain, Arapaho Basin Ski Resort, and the USFS, which allows resort visitors to make donations to support on-the-ground stewardship of the White River National Forest. This past quarter, eleven local nonprofit groups on the White River National Forest completed numerous stewardship projects supported by over half a million dollars in investments made through the Ski Conservation Fund.

Region 2, NFF support wildlife habitat through Wildlife Habitat Mitigation Fund. The NFF has received and is managing numerous mitigation payments made by project proponents that are impacting wildlife habitat and other resources on the White River National Forest. This past quarter, the NFF's management of mitigation payments from Laramie Energy, Xcel Energy, and Vail Resorts led to over \$60,000 worth of wildlife habitat improvement projects on the Dillon and Rifle Ranger Districts of the White River National Forest.

Region 4's Uinta Wasatch Cache National Forest completes Lion Hill Project to benefit Greater Sage Grouse and Mule Deer. As part of the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Project, the Uinta Wasatch Cache National Forest recently completed a joint conservation effort between the USDA Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Shampip Conservation District, and State of Utah Department of Natural Resources. These partners came together to enhance a total of 1,330 acres to benefit Greater Sage Grouse and Mule Deer Habitat, increase rangeland forage production, and modify fuels through a variety of treatments. Further acres are planned for completion. The highlight of this project was the joint effort to treat critical landscapes across multiple land ownerships. In addition to the partners listed above, partial funding for the project came through the Utah Partners for Conservation and Development (UPCD), a unique partnership of county, state, and federal agencies, and over 30 non-profit organizations. Specifically, the Mule Deer Foundation, Sportsman for Fish and Wildlife, and Safari Club International provided significant funding through the UPCD and Utah Watershed Initiative programs. Total costs of the project were \$230,770.

Region 4 celebrated Ashley National Forest YCC Program's 8th year. During 2015, the Ashley National Forest celebrated its eighth year of a unique partnership with a county organization and local university for a Youth Conservation Corp (YCC) program that provides youth employment, exposes students to natural resource careers, gets important work done on the ground, and provides students an opportunity to earn college credit. The program was developed in 2008 to address the low rates of students in the county attending education beyond high school (i.e. 36.0% for the county in 2009, compared to national average of 70.1%). This program is a true partnership effort, substantially funded each year through a cooperative grant from the Uintah Impact Mitigation Special Service District. Students in the program enroll with Utah State University Uintah Basin Regional Campus, receiving three college credits for their Y.C.C. experience with scholarships to fund the majority of tuition costs. The success rate of students in the program attending additional education after high school exceeds 90%. Since inception, 80 students have participated and partners have provided over \$350,000 in grant and scholarship funding. Total project work accomplished on the Forest is valued over \$671,000 with 31,521 accumulated hours of work.

Region 5 Partnership with Engineering Organizations. R5 entered into a Master Challenge Cost Share Agreement with Engineers Without Borders and the American Society of Civil Engineers. These two non-profit professional societies have members who want to donate their time and expertise to help the agency with its backlog of engineering projects. The Angeles NF is the first to take advantage of this new regional agreement. Volunteer engineers from these two groups will be providing professional engineering design services for Wildwood Picnic Area, a popular recreation site that was damaged in the Station Fire.

Region 5: Two Partnerships with NFWF. R5 entered into a Challenge Cost Share Agreement with National Fish and Wildlife Foundation with the purpose of identifying and funding fuel management projects across Region 5. Projects will be chosen that reduce the risk of severe wildfires while also maximizing ecological outcomes and financial savings. For example, the partnership will target a portion of fuel management funding to landscapes that were impacted by the Zaca Fire. Region 5 also entered into a five-year Participating Agreement Supplemental

Project Agreement with NFWF and the Los Padres National Forest to develop and implement a watershed-based conservation framework for three HUC-8 watersheds associated with the Zaca Fire. NFWF will use the conservation framework as a vehicle to attract other partners, both federal and non-federal, to support additional activities in the watershed. The work is kicking off with the planting of 55,000 trees, funded by PG&E, a NFWF corporate partner, as an initial pilot project. This SPA represents an almost \$14 million investment by the Forest Service and NFWF, not including the leveraged funds NFWF plans to raise. This agreement is helping the Region invest fire settlement funding in the most effective way possible. As part of this agreement, the Forest Service is funding a lead representative position at NFWF to liaise with the Region to advance the scope of work.

Region 6 created the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail Advisory Council. In August 2015, Secretary Vilsack appointed 23 members to the inaugural Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail (PNNST) Advisory Council. These 23 committed citizens, representing diverse interests across the northwest, will help the agency develop a comprehensive plan for the Trail. Alongside other allies and advocates, such as the Pacific Northwest Trail Association, the Council members will help land managers balance user and community interests along the Trail. Chief among their goals is to build local community support and private landowner acceptance for the Trail. One of America's 11 National Scenic Trails, the 1,200-mile Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail crosses seven national forests as it connects the Continental Divide in Glacier National Park to the Pacific Ocean at Cape Alava in the Olympic National Park.

Region 6 launched the Community Capacity and Land Stewardship Grant Program. The Community Capacity and Land Stewardship (CCLS) Grant Program launched in 2010 with the leadership of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office and a group of dedicated conservation partners. On September 1, 2015, Region 6 issued its fifth annual Request for Proposals for grants to support collaborative groups as they increase their capacity to plan and implement landscape-scale restoration projects in the Region. CCLS is administered by the National Forest Foundation, and has grown to include grant programs in R5 and R10, as well as R6.

Region 6 established the Pacific Northwest Regional Public Lands Corps Agreement with Job Corps. The Pacific Northwest Region has established a Region-wide Public Lands Corps Agreement, covering the 17 national forests and six Job Corps Civilian Conservation Centers (JCCCs) in Oregon and Washington. The Regional Agreement directly supports the objectives of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC) initiative. The Agreement streamlines the forest's ability to provide Job Corps students with on-the-job training and Public Lands Corps hiring eligibility while helping the agency accomplish mission-critical work. Importantly, the Agreement also signals our Regional Forester's commitment to 21CSC and to expanding the Region's relationship with Job Corps.

Region 8 initiates multi-partner dialogue on urban conservation and reaching underserved communities. The Southern Region has formed an internal partnership around urban conservation and reaching underserved communities. In the next quarter, the region will be engaging 14 core conservation partners in a broad scale conversation on leveraging our resources to make a greater impact in these communities with conservation education, job creation, and green space expansion.

Region 9 expands VetsWork partnership to Monongahela, Hoosier, and Shawnee, building on a long-standing Mark Twain NF partnership with VetsWork. VetWork is a 45-week AmeriCorps internship program connecting U.S. military veterans with federal, state, and local public land management and natural resource agencies to help vets transition from a military to a civilian career while meeting public lands and natural resource management agency needs.

New Partnership with Lexington School for the Deaf helps Region 9's Green Mountain National Forest celebrate National Public Lands Day with a week-long celebration designed to educate students about public lands, natural resource management, and Forest Service careers. While living and working in Vermont, ten students and two school administrators learned about timber, wildlife, fisheries management, recreation, botany, archaeology, and special uses through hands-on activities. An outpouring of local community support contributed to the week's overall success. This project was possible thanks to a 21CSC Forest Service grant.

Region 9 partners with Appalachian Forest Heritage Association to develop new self-guided tour of the Monongahela National Forest's Highland Scenic Highway (HSH) through Federal Highways Scenic Byway and Secure Rural Schools grants. The new "43 Miles of Discovery" audio tour enhances the route's 76 new interpretive markers and five informational kiosks along 43 miles, providing visitors with first-hand accounts of the area's history, biology and geology through 18 points of interest.

Youth partnerships promote conservation and restoration across Region 9. With help from Urban Connections, a 10-person Student Conservation Association (SCA) Detroit crew rerouted 1499 feet of Bruno's Run mountain biking trail on the Hiawatha National Forest, exploring forest management and taking in the beauty of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Two Milwaukee-based SCA groups spent six weeks doing urban conservation plus Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest trails and invasive species work, funded by 21CSC and SCA partners. Milwaukee Urban Connections partnered with Mobilize Green, a 21 CSC organization, to recruit and hire four summer conservation education interns to work for nine weeks in Milwaukee. The Conservation Education Intern team reached more than 1600 Milwaukee youth through interactive programs about forests, habitat, invasive species, plants and animals, pollinators, recreation, and natural resource careers.

Region 10 established the Alaska Forest Fund in partnership with the National Forest Foundation. Regional Forester Beth Pendleton and National Forest Foundation President Bill Possiel in August signed a five-year Challenge Cost-Share Agreement establishing the Alaska Forest Fund. The Fund is a long-term campaign led by NFF that will leverage strategic investments by the Forest Service with private support from corporations, foundations, individuals, and nonprofit organizations. This four-way partnership is designed to remove barriers to philanthropy by creating a central resource for donors and Forest Service partners. Funds will be used to complete high-priority projects that support outdoor experiences and conservation in Alaska's national forests. Next steps include developing a list of projects for potential funding in 2016.